

Guidelines and Procedures for Museum Collections Management

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The Fairfax County Park Authority collects, preserves, exhibits and interprets museum objects in support of the stated mission and comprehensive plan of the Authority:

"To ... assist citizens in the protection of...cultural heritage to guarantee that these resources will be available to both present and future generations"

"Cultural resources... may include structures, historic landscapes ... folklore, documents... object... The obligation to preserve these cultural resources ... is the obligation of stewardship. Within the context of stewardship ... policies, guidelines and laws charge the Fairfax County Park Authority with the obligation to locate, identify, evaluate, preserve, manage and interpret significant cultural resources ... in such a way that they may be preserved for future generations."

and the stated mission of the Resource Management Division:

"To identify, preserve and interpret the cultural ... resources of Fairfax County and the Fairfax County Park Authority; to encourage the enjoyment, understanding and appreciation of these resources by citizens and visitors; ... to provide leadership ... in protecting and maintaining the county's heritage; to maintain museum accreditation and the highest professional standards of stewardship and interpretation."

The Fairfax County Park Authority Board recognizes that stewardship of collections entails the highest public trust. Collections management is accordingly recognized as an essential responsibility of the Authority. Members of the Fairfax County Park Authority Board and all Park Authority staff subscribe to the American Association of Museums "Code of Ethics for Museums", as they apply to Museum Collections, and all collections management guidelines and procedures.

Enforcement of the policies, ethics, standards and procedures concerning the preservation and protection of the Fairfax County Park Authority Museum Collections is the responsibility of all Fairfax County Park Authority staff in any and all instances in which museum collections are exhibited, stored, interpreted or otherwise utilized.

The Director of the Fairfax County Park Authority has assigned responsibility for the Museum Collections to the Resource Management Division. The Director of the Resource Management Division has delegated administration of museum collections to the Cultural Resource Management and Protection Branch. Under the supervision of the Branch Manager, the Museum Collections Manager is charged with daily care and security of the Museum Collections, including the manner in which objects are exhibited, stored, transported and conserved, as well as planning for future needs and growth. Specific procedures for the appropriate care and management of the Museum Collections are set forth in the Collections Manual and are based on standards of the American Association of Museums.

The Resource Management Committee of the Park Authority Board is responsible for review of the Museum Collections Policy. Museum Collections Management staff shall revise the

collections management procedures and manuals as necessary to comply with professional guidelines and best practices.

SCOPE OF COLLECTIONS

The Fairfax County Park Authority collects artifacts, photographs, documents, architectural and archaeological artifacts and other material culture and reference materials in support of the Park Authority's stated mission and purposes so that they may be preserved, exhibited, interpreted, or used for research. Wherever possible, original objects shall be collected. Where these must be preserved or are prohibitive or not available, reproductions may be acquired to support the Authority's interpretive mission. The following categories shall be collected:

- Objects and materials associated with or representing the history of the historic structures, sites and parks administered by the Fairfax County Park Authority
- Objects and materials associated with or representing the history of individuals residing or businesses operating at those historic structures, sites and parks
- Objects and materials associated with or representing the cultural origins connected with those historic structures, sites and parks
- Objects and materials associated with or representing the general history, growth and development of Fairfax County

The Fairfax County Park Authority collections are classified as follows and all gifts, purchases, loans, found and field collected materials shall be assigned to one of the following collections:

- Museum Collections - The permanent collection of original museum objects as defined in the Scope of Collections above. Such items may be used for exhibition and research purposes and, in specified instances, interpretive programs. These collections of material culture owned by or on loan to the Fairfax County Park Authority shall be preserved, protected and cared for by the Authority in the public trust for future generations.
- Archives Collection - Documentary, photographic, and audio-visual materials pertaining to the history of the Fairfax County Park Authority. The purpose of this archive shall be to preserve such records and to serve as a central repository available to scholars, Park Authority staff, citizens of Fairfax County, and other researchers studying and recording the history of Fairfax County.
- Education Collection - Reproductions, duplicate museum objects, and special use items which conform to the Scope of Collections as defined above and which may be used for exhibition, study, or educational purposes. Reproductions will be identified and the special nature of museum objects in this collection will be discussed by staff to the best of their ability whenever inquiries are made by the public.
- Architectural Collections - Architectural materials and original building fragments acquired as a result of structural preservation activities or field collection. Such artifacts serve as primary source materials for research and may also be used for exhibition and interpretive programs.

ACQUISITIONS

Materials and objects of historic significance may be acquired through gift, purchase, bequest, exchange, field collection or other transactions whereby title of ownership is transferred to the Fairfax County Park Authority. Members of the Park Authority Board and staff are discouraged from collecting privately in competition with the Authority. Fairfax County Park Authority Board members and staff shall follow the same guidelines and procedures as all other donors and lenders to the Authority.

In acquiring museum objects, each proffered gift or potential purchase shall be evaluated individually in terms of its conformity to the Scope of Collections, its authenticity, condition, quality, the foreseeable needs of the collection, and the ability of the Fairfax County Park Authority to care for the object or material in a manner consistent with professional museum standards.

All donations of museum objects are considered outright and unrestricted gifts to be used at the sole discretion of the Fairfax County Park Authority. Donors must certify that they have clear title of ownership to proffered gifts. Acquisitions shall include full literary rights, property rights, copyrights, patents and trademarks. No staff member may reproduce objects from any of the Authority's collections for private sale or gain.

The Authority shall not purchase acquisitions of museum objects from members of the Park Authority Board, staff or volunteers. The Fairfax County Park Authority will not knowingly accept any object that has been stolen or illegally exported from its country of origin or whose recovery involved destruction of historic or archaeological sites, buildings, structures, objects or the culture of which they were a part for the purpose of their acquisition.

Accessioning is the formal process used to accept and record an item as a museum collections object. After consideration by appropriate staff, the Museum Collections Manager shall submit a written recommendation to acquire an object or material for approval to the Cultural Resource Management and Protection Branch Manager, the Resource Management Division Director, and the Park Authority Director. No other staff member, volunteer, or other persons associated with the Fairfax County Park Authority may obligate the Authority to accept or purchase any object or material. Once approved, acquisitions shall be accessioned promptly according to procedures stated in the Museum Collections Manual.

The Fairfax County Park Authority assumes no responsibility for the appraisal of objects or materials offered as gifts to the Authority. No staff member shall offer to estimate the fair market value of materials or objects or reveal the insurance value of similar items for the purpose of establishing a fair market value for gifts offered or casually brought to the Fairfax County Park Authority. Donors desiring income tax deductions must obtain independent appraisals.

LOANS

Loans are temporary assignments of collection objects to or from the Authority which do not involve a change of ownership and which are for stated purposes, such as exhibition or research. All loan activities shall be conducted in a manner that respects the protection and preservation of cultural resources. All loans extended to or from the Fairfax County Park

Authority shall be for stated and specific periods of time. Loans to the Authority shall be appropriate to the Scope of Collections and shall be given the same level of care as provided to the Authority's own collections. Lenders must certify that they hold full and clear title to the objects or are the duly authorized agent of the owner.

The Museum Collections Manager monitors all loans and specifies conditions for their exhibition, interpretive use, protection and care. Any and all restrictions and specific conditions accompanying a loan to or from the Authority shall be so stated on the Authority's appropriate Loan Agreement Form. Written approval of the Authority's appropriate loan agreement by the Cultural Resource Management and Protection Branch Manager and the Resource Management Division Director is required to finalize all loans.

Loans from the Fairfax County Park Authority will be made only to those institutions able to provide objects the proper care and protection required during transport and exhibition and through all phases of the loan period. Loans from the Fairfax County Park Authority shall be made only to other museums for educational, interpretive or research purposes.

Objects placed in the temporary custody of the Authority are items that are not owned by the Authority but left temporarily on its premises. As a public service, staff may attempt to attribute, identify or authenticate such objects brought to the Authority. All objects or materials left in the temporary custody of the Authority must be accompanied by a written receipt signed by the owner and by an authorized staff person. All objects left in temporary custody of the Authority must immediately be turned over to the Museum Collections Manager for appropriate action. Such objects or materials may not be deposited with the Authority or remain on Authority premises longer than sixty days, unless mutually agreed upon in writing. The Authority accepts no responsibility for notification of individuals for the return of such deposits. After one year, unclaimed property shall become an unrestricted gift to the Authority.

CARE

The Fairfax County Park Authority assumes responsibility for the care, protection and preservation of the museum objects under its stewardship. Museum Collections practices and procedures followed by the Authority conform to professional standards established by the American Association of Museums and are specified in the Museum Collections Manual. The Museum Collections Manager shall monitor the exhibition, storage, interpretation or other utilization of the Museum Collections so as to ensure that the methods of their preservation, protection and security are in accordance with professional museum standards.

RECORDS

All records correspond to each museum object which shall be given its own unique accession number. Each type of collection shall use a numbering system that is distinct from all the others. A permanent record of accessions with their documentation, including all legal instruments, agreements, conveyances, research and descriptive catalog records pertaining to each acquisition and loan in the Museum Collections shall be maintained by the Museum Collections Manager. These records shall be kept according to professional museum standards and updated regularly through annual inventory, periodic reappraisal, research and other appropriate means to provide a record of the current status of each object in the collection. Duplicate catalog records are deposited in a separate, secure location.

All records pertaining to the Education, Archives, and Architectural Collections shall also be maintained by the Museum Collections Manager.

INSURANCE

All Museum Collections acquisitions and all objects covered by formal loan agreement with the Fairfax County Park Authority shall be insured through a museum fine arts policy, unless specifically stated in writing as otherwise insured. All outgoing loans shall be insured by the borrower, unless specifically stated in writing as otherwise insured. Objects or materials left in temporary custody are not covered by Fairfax County Park Authority insurance. All other Park Authority collections are insured through the Authority's policy for property loss.

The Authority shall make every attempt to maintain current fair market values for the objects in the Museum Collections by assigning estimated values at the time of accession and by employing a certified appraiser to conduct reappraisals of objects valued over \$10,000 every five years.

All records of insurance and appraisal value for the Museum Collections shall be maintained by the Museum Collections Manager.

ACCESS

The Park Authority's collections and related information are made accessible to the public through its exhibits and programs and to researchers by appointment. Access to the collections and their related records for research and educational purposes by scholars, students and the public is monitored by the Museum Collections Manager.

An annual Summary the Status of the Collections shall be submitted to the Cultural Resource Management and Protection Branch Manager for inclusion in the annual report. This report shall summarize all Museum Collections activities.

DEACCESSIONING

Deaccessioning is the formal process of permanently removing accessioned objects and materials from the Museum Collections. This process shall be measured and deliberate.

Before an object is recommended for deaccessioning, all reasonable efforts shall be made to ascertain that the Authority is legally free to do so. The Museum Collections Manager in consultation with other appropriate staff may recommend an object for deaccessioning if no restrictions prohibit the removal of an object or material from the collection, and if one or more of the following criteria are met:

- The object or material is not relevant or useful to the stated purposes of the Fairfax County Park Authority or is outside the Scope of Collections as stated above.
- The object or material has failed to retain its identity or authenticity, and has deteriorated beyond usefulness or practicable conservation.

- The object or material has been lost or stolen and remains lost for longer than five years or five inventories of the complete collection.
- The object or material duplicates other objects or materials in the collection.
- The Park Authority lacks the resources to preserve the object properly
- Deaccession and disposal of the object or material does not compromise the Authority's commitment to protect and preserve natural and cultural resources, to discourage illicit trade in such materials and to respect the special nature of human remains and funerary and sacred objects.

Each object in Museum Collections must be individually recommended for deaccessioning in writing on the Park Authority's Deaccession and Disposal Form and include the object's source, estimated market value, reason for recommending deaccessioning and suggested method of disposal.

Cultural Resource Management and Protection Branch Manager may approve the deaccessioning of an object from the Museum Collections for transfer to another Fairfax County Park Authority collection when it more properly meets the criteria of the other collection.

Objects with a value of \$5,000 or less that meet the deaccessioning criteria can be deaccessioned and disposed of with the approval of the Director of the Fairfax County Park Authority. The Fairfax County Park Authority Board is advised of all such deaccessions.

The procedure for deaccessioning is as follows:

- The Collections Managers in consultation with other appropriate staff recommends an object for deaccessioning in writing, using the Authority's Deaccession and Disposal Form.
- The Cultural Resource Management and Protection Branch Manager reviews the recommendation. If approved, the recommendation to deaccession is forwarded to the Director of the Resource Management Division.
- The Director of the Resource Management Division reviews the recommendation. If approved, the recommendation to deaccession is forwarded to the Director of the Fairfax County Park Authority.
- The Director of the Park Authority reviews the recommendation. If approved, and the object is valued at \$100,000 or more, then the Director forwards the recommendation to deaccession to the Fairfax County Park Authority Board.
- The Board reviews and approves or disapproves the recommendation.
- When an object has been deaccessioned, steps to dispose of the object are as follows:
- As a courtesy, original donors of deaccessioned gifts will be notified of the Park Authority's decision to deaccession the object.

- Every effort shall be made to place deaccessioned objects with another museum or cultural institution by offering them for sale or exchange and advertising in appropriate professional media.
- If no museum or institution expresses interest in acquiring the deaccessioned object through sale or exchange, it is placed at auction for sale to the general public.
- No member of the Fairfax County Park Authority board, staff or their immediate families or representatives may purchase or otherwise acquire any deaccessioned object.
- Upon deaccessioning and disposal, all records pertaining to the object are placed in a special file for deaccessioned objects. In no event are any documents or other records concerning the object disposed of or destroyed.
- Disposal of collections through sale, trade or research activities is solely for the advancement of the Authority's mission. All proceeds realized from the sale of a deaccessioned object are placed in the Fairfax County Park Authority fund account specifically designated for acquisitions to or conservation of objects in the Museum Collections.

ETHICS AND HISTORIC COLLECTIONS

The Fairfax County Park Authority subscribes to the "Code of Ethics for Museums" adopted by the American Association of Museums.